



“Board of Special Inquiry” **4th-7th Grade** **On-Site Activity**

Overview:

Immigrants who failed the initial inspection at the Great Hall had to undergo a more lengthy interrogation at the Board of Special Inquiry. Immigrants had about ten-minutes to convince two of three adjudicators to being upstanding individuals, with these inspectors hearing up to two-hundred cases a day. In this activity, students will get the chance to play the role of an inspector hearing the pleas of six immigrants.

New York State Learning Standards:

- Elementary:
- Standard 4: 1B, 1C, 1E
- Standard 5: 1B
- Intermediate:
- Standard 4: 1C, 1D, 1E
- Standard 5: 1A, 1C

Time Frame:

30 minutes

Materials:

- Six immigrant case studies (at the end of this document)
- Pen and paper

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Investigate several reasons to why select immigrant groups were admitted and others were not, according to U.S. immigration policy.
- Interpret some requirements in federal immigration policy and its impact on newly-arrived immigrants.
- Analyze how the federal government has used immigration policies to screen individuals arriving to this country.

Procedure:

1. Head to the second floor. On the Southwest end of the building, go through the *Through America's Gate* exhibit. Proceed to the end of the hall entitled *Board of Special Inquiry*. Distribute the six-immigrant case studies (enclosed at the end of the document).
2. Describe that for many newly-arrived passengers, immigrant processing remained a very difficult task. Immigrants endured a gauntlet of medical examinations, hours of waiting, which concluded with a sixty-second legal inspection to determine whether they can obtain entry to this country. **Explain that students today will be playing the role of legal inspectors who get to decide who enters, who is detained, and who might be deported from this country.**
3. Break the class into groups of five people. (Each group will receive one or two case studies, depending on the size of the class). *Alternative Assessment:* Each group can have two case studies, with one that repeats. Each person in the group will be assigned a role and be asked to consider the following questions:
 - What is your name?
 - How old are you?
 - What is your final destination?
 - Have you ever been arrested?
 - Do you have a job?
 - How much money do you have?
4. While each group pays careful attention to the case studies, instruct the class... Remember, to enter America an immigrant:
 - **Had to be a law abiding individual**
 - **Had to have \$25 or more**
 - **Could not have a job**
5. Head back to the Great Hall after visiting the Board of Special Inquiry. Employing the group work protocol, students will be divided into groups of three-to-four to determine whether their immigrant case studies are worthy to enter the country. Each group will be responsible for considering the requirements for entry to the United States, and pay special focus to the historical period. Further, each group will use their visit to help guide them with their responses. A list of three points must be included to support their position.
6. Review the responses with the students. With time remaining, ask students to consider why the United States installed such requirements to enter the country. Have students think over what are some of the regulations the federal government wants newly-arrived immigrants to have today. (Attached at the end of the document are some federal government regulations).
7. Optional Class Discussion: Do you think the government has tougher policies today or in the past? Why do you think the federal government found some of these practices to be necessary? Do you think these requirements are fair?

Name: Daniel Pappas

Age: 25

Final Destination: New York City

Have you ever been arrested? No

Do you have a job? Yes

How much money do you have? \$26.00

Name: Irene Vacek

Age: 36

Final Destination: Chicago, Illinois

Have you ever been arrested? No

Do you have a job? No

How much money do you have? \$10.75

Name: Anthony Santoni

Age: 20

Final Destination: Lowell, Massachusetts

Have you ever been arrested? No

Do you have a job? No

How much money do you have? \$25.00

Name: John Moore

Age: 47

Final Destination: Iowa

Have you ever been arrested? Yes

Do you have a job? No

How much money do you have? \$27.00

Name: Anna Goldman

Age: 12

Final Destination: New York City

Have you ever been arrested? No

Do you have a job? No

How much money do you have? \$5.00

Daniel Pappas would be detained for further investigation because he had a job waiting for him in America. He was violating the *Contract Labor Law of 1885*.

Irene Vacek would be detained because she does not have enough money to enter America. The legal inspectors at Ellis Island did not want to let anyone into America that could possibly become a *public charge*, a person who becomes dependent on the government for support.

Anthony Santoni would be allowed to enter the country as long as he also passed his medical inspection. He has money to support himself while he looks for a job and is not a criminal. He is a perfect candidate for entry into America.

John Moore would be detained for further investigation because of his criminal past. The legal inspectors did not want to let any criminals into America. They only wanted law abiding individuals.

Anna Goldman would be allowed into America. Since she was still a child, a family member who was already living in America would meet her at Ellis Island. After being released to her family member, they would travel together to their destination.

During the **legal inspection**, the inspector would have the ship's manifest in front of him at his desk in the Registry Room. The manifest contained the information to the questions that the immigrants answered at their port of departure. The inspectors would ask the immigrants specific questions from the manifest.